

DESERT DUNES, PLAYAS, BADLANDS & MUDHILL FORBS VEGETATION COMMUNITIES



Desert Playa is one of the most interesting habitats in San Diego County. They, in essence, consist of dry lake beds that contain water ONLY following unusually heavy rainfall events. Each flood period may occur in winter or after unusually heavy summer thunderstorms.

There are several distinctive naturally occurring playas in San Diego County, including the Borrego Sink and Clark Dry Lake. These areas are nearly devoid of vegetation over much of their surface, though a few specially adapted plants such as *Hoffmanseggia* do grow in the bottoms or edges of dry lakebeds. A view of these lakebeds filled with water is a sight to behold.

Desert Dunes support a series of unique plants and are found predominantly east of Borrego Springs. Plants that grow on desert dune habitats are adapted to conditions of shifting sand. They have long root systems to tap into the moisture from seasonal rainfall that lies deep within the dunes. The Flat tailed horned lizard is one species that is considered rare and endangered that occurs within the sand dune habitats as well as species of Milkvetch plants.

Mudhill Forbs habitat exists as the result of exposures of soils that may exist as clay or may have high content of minerals such as gypsum. The soils may be sticky when wet and very unstable and crumbly when dry. This unstable character and the lack of oxygen available to roots when the soils are wet eliminates the potential for many shrubs to grow there. However, in some locations, the clay soils support small native, shallow rooted, annual plants that can grow on these soils following normal or above normal winter rainfall.



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